

Personal Essay Skills List

Grades 4-8 Skills List

The writer of a competent personal essay demonstrates most or all of the following skills:

PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

- Focuses on the purpose of relating the significance of central idea
- Communicates the significance of the central idea
- Narrows the topic
- Uses an individual voice
- Creates a title which captures the essence of the piece and creates reader interest

IDEA DEVELOPMENT/SUPPORT

- Develops ideas by using relevant supporting details from life experiences
- Describes emotions and thoughts concerning the central idea
- Clarifies details through explanation and connections

ORGANIZATION

- Writes an engaging lead
- Places ideas and details in a meaningful order
- Organizes the essay into paragraphs
- Uses transitions between ideas
- Maintains coherence and unity
- Concludes the essay effectively

SENTENCES

- Writes complete and varied sentences

LANGUAGE

- Chooses language appropriate to the audience and purpose
- Writes in first person
- Uses appropriate language
- Maintains consistent verb tense
- Makes subjects and verbs agree
- Employs correct usage

CORRECTNESS

- Spells correctly
- Uses correct end punctuation, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes
- Capitalizes correctly

- Makes few errors in correctness which do not interfere with the meaning of the piece
- Cites references and documents sources(when necessary)

As students move from grade to grade, they demonstrate growth in the control and complexity with which they use these skills.

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to fit the category

Fourth-grade Personal Essay

Submissions may still be sent to

Lee Ann Hager
500 Mero Street, CPT 1913
Frankfort, KY 40601

Phone: (502) 564-2106
Fax: (502) 564-6470

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Fifth-grade Personal Essay

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Music

"Music is the outburst of the soul."

Frederick Delius

What does this quote mean to you? To me this means that you can't have music inside you locked in a box forever. You have to let it go; let it be free. Such as, when a song comes on, you like it, and you want to sing to it. But your friends are around and they think the song is stupid, so you keep quiet. I learned this in 5th grade. It started when I liked a certain song a girl wrote and I was afraid my friends would make fun of me because I liked a song by a girl. It turned out that the rest of my friends liked the same song and they were afraid to tell anyone they liked it too. From that day on we vowed not to keep songs from each other again. That's keeping music locked inside you.

Music is important to me because without music life would be a gray, dull world where no one has fun. Without music I wouldn't be able to sing, dance, or even have the friends I do. Music has brought out the soul in me and helped me discover more about myself. That's why I need music in my life.

Music plays an important part in my life. When I was young the only thing that seemed to float in my ears were cartoon theme songs or nursery rhymes; everything else went out the other side. When I was around three years old my favorite song was "Elmo's World." Whenever this song came on Sesame Street, I would run in my room and get my Elmo toy and start dancing with it to the tune. Another song I liked before I started school was Barney's theme song. Everyday my sister and I would go get our purple dinosaurs and play all our Barney tapes and sing to them as best we could. I know a little boy now that's only three years old and I smile when I see him because he is

dancing and singing to the same songs that I did at that age. It's a great feeling to see others enjoying the music I do.

When I was in 3rd grade I started liking country, but I would still play some nursery rhymes on the piano. My sister is the one that got me into country songs when she liked them too. I really liked songs by Shania Twain, Tim McGraw, and Dixie Chicks. I liked these people because their songs had good beats and they were easy for me to sing along to. I loved to sing along to Shania Twain's "Don't Be Stupid" because it has a good beat and rhythm. Whenever I start to do something stupid I think of this song. Another song I liked was Tim McGraw's "My Old Friend." I liked this song because of its awesome beat. When this song comes on it makes me think that just because I make new friends doesn't mean I have to leave my old ones. I also liked Dixie Chick's "Traveling Soldier" because it reminded me of all the soldiers that go and risk their lives in the war just for us. I also liked this song because it made me think of my uncle. The only reason I liked this song was because I missed my uncle while he was away at war and because I didn't know if I would ever see him again. It's funny to think that music can bring out all of these emotions and make my memories stand out in my mind so much.

One song in 4th grade that I really liked was "Because You Loved Me" by Celine Dion. My class sung this song for all our moms on Mother's Day. It had a soothing beat and it talks about Celine always being there for her son and him appreciating it. Whenever I hear this song I almost cry because one day my mom will need me there for her and I will return the favor she has done for me; the favor of caring so much. I also like to sing to my younger cousins. I sing to them to try to put them to sleep. I even sing

to my dogs, and go out on the porch and sing along to my CD player. Usually on holidays my family gets together at my grandmother's house and I take my keyboard and saxophone with me. I will play them a tune to whatever holiday it is.

As I got older my music style began to change. When I began 6th grade I started to like rock. Some of my favorites were "Picture" by Kid Rock, "My Humps" by Black-Eyed Peas, and "I Write Sins Not Tragedies" by Panic at the Disco. I liked this kind of music because all of my friends did at the time and the rhythms were unique. "Picture" was my favorite. Whenever I heard it I would start to sing along and whenever it cussed I would make a beeping noise. I did this because I was afraid that if I said the real thing I would have gotten in trouble with my mom or dad. Listening to this kind of music was a big change for me. I guess it shows not only my changing style of music but my growth as a teenager as well.

When I'm in my car and these songs come on the radio I tell my dad or mom to turn it up and I start singing along. Not to long ago I started liking soundtracks from movies. Some of these were the "Oompa Loompa" song off *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. Another is "Breaking Free" off *High School Musical*. I like these because they are from my favorite two movies and they sound better than any other songs in the movies.

Today I like to listen to classics, country, soundtracks from movies, and rock. One song I like in classics is "Ode to Joy"; Beethoven composed it. I like to play this melody on the piano on my free time because I like the rhythm. Songs I like in country are Carrie Underwood's "Jesus Take the Wheel" and "Before He Cheats." I like these songs because they have a good beat that make me want to dance. Some of the soundtracks I

like are "Circle of Life" off of *The Lion King*, "Sally's Obsession" off of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, and "Under the Sea" off of the movie *The Little Mermaid*. I like these songs because they are all mind probing and make me think. "Circle of Life" leaves me thinking that every little thing has a purpose in and is important. "Sally's Obsession" leaves me thinking that everyone has to be loved and should love in return. While "Under the Sea" leaves me wondering about the vastness of the world and what all goes on down deep in the sea. Some rock songs I like are "Hey! Baby!" composed by Margaret Cobb and "Far From Over" composed by Frank Stallone. I like these songs because they have a superior beat and are fun to play on the saxophone. "Hey! Baby!" is a pep song the band plays and it is the first song that I actually got a chance to clap and sing to. "Far From Over" is also a pep song we play at basketball games when we are down. We play this to let the other team know that the game is far from over and we are getting ready to attack.

Even though I like a variety of songs, as I grow older I still hear the songs I once enjoyed when I was younger and remember how important they are to me. I still sing along to them when I hear them and love every moment. I'm glad that these songs will always be part of my childhood and they are something I will never lose or forget. After listening to such a variety of music, it has made me appreciate it and has let my soul take to music by not only singing to it but playing it too.

Music

"Music is the outburst of the soul."

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quote enhances the significance of the central event

engaging lead

What does this quote mean to you? To me this means that you can't have music

central idea

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sentence variety

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1st person

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narrows the topic

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re-emphasizes central idea

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correctness

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and get my Elmo toy and start dancing with it to the tune. Another song I liked before I

started school was Barney's theme song. Everyday my sister and I would go get our

purple dinosaurs and play all our Barney tapes and sing to them as best we could. I know

a little boy now that's only three years old and I smile when I see him because he is

dancing and singing to the same songs that I did at that age. It's a great feeling to see others enjoying the music I do. *describes emotions concerning central idea*

transition — When I was in 3rd grade I started liking country, but I would still play some nursery rhymes on the piano. My sister is the one that got me into country songs when she liked them too. I really liked songs by Shania Twain, Tim McGraw, and Dixie Chicks. I liked these people because their songs had good beats and they were easy for me to sing along to. I loved to sing along to Shania Twain's "Don't Be Stupid" because it has a good beat and rhythm. Whenever I start to do something stupid I think of this song. Another song I liked was Tim McGraw's "My Old Friend." I liked this song because of its awesome beat. When this song comes on it makes me think that just

detail that clarifies because I make new friends doesn't mean I have to leave my old ones. I also liked Dixie Chick's "Traveling Soldier" because it reminded me of all the soldiers that go and risk their lives in the war just for us. I also liked this song because it made me think of my uncle. The only reason I liked this song was because I missed my uncle while he was away at war and because I didn't know if I would ever see him again. It's funny to think that music can bring out all of these emotions and make my memories stand out in my mind so much. *describes emotion*

One song in 4th grade that I really liked was "Because You Loved Me" by Celine Dion. My class sung this song for all our moms on Mother's Day. *correct usage* *appropriate language* It had a soothing beat and it talks about Celine always being there for her son and him appreciating it.

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life experiences

logical order
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like rock. Some of my favorites were "Picture" by Kid Rock, "My Humps" by Black-Eyed Peas, and "I Write Sins Not Tragedies" by Panic at the Disco. I liked this kind of music because all of my friends did at the time and the *appropriate language* rhythms were unique. "Picture"

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individual voice

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personal experience

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Concludes essay effectively

Next Lessons

- * creating a title that captures the reader's interest
- * experimenting with alternate leads

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Eighth-grade Personal Essay

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